



WISCONSIN LEGISLATOR BRIEFING BOOK 2015-16

CHAPTER 8 – INTERSTATE LEGISLATIVE ORGANIZATIONS

State legislatures across the country face many similar challenges and policy decisions. As a result, legislators frequently ask for information about legislative approaches used in other states when developing policy for the State of Wisconsin. Wisconsin is a member of several national legislative organizations that serve as good resources for obtaining this type of information. The organizations also host conferences and briefings for legislators and legislative staff to provide information about policy issues and to build connections between legislators from different states.

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BACKGROUND

Interstate legislative organizations serve several functions on behalf of state legislatures. First, the organizations collect and provide information to aid in state policy development. Many of these organizations compile issue-based summaries of state legislation, offer briefings and background on various policy areas, and disseminate information directly to legislators and staff.

Second, interstate legislative organizations host conferences or meetings for legislators and legislative staff. These meetings provide seminars on policy areas and current topics faced by states. The meetings also provide an opportunity for legislators and staff to interact with their counterparts in other states, with representatives of non-legislative governmental institutions, and with private sector organizations.

Third, interstate legislative organizations represent the views of state legislatures at the federal level. The organizations may develop policy statements and take positions on federal issues that affect state governments, and convey these positions to federal lawmakers and agencies.

Finally, interstate legislative organizations promote and work toward state cooperation and consistency in state laws in areas where such uniformity is desirable.

This chapter provides an overview of the interstate legislative organizations to which Wisconsin belongs through a charter or a legislative appropriation.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF STATE LEGISLATURES (NCSL)

Purpose

NCSL CONTACT INFORMATION:

<http://www.ncsl.org>

Denver Headquarters
(303) 364-7700

Washington, D.C. Office
(202) 624-5400

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NCSL was founded in 1975 and resulted from the merger of three legislative groups: the National Legislative Conference, the National Conference of State Legislative Leaders, and the National Society of State Legislators.

The purposes and objectives of NCSL, as stated in its bylaws, are to: (1) advance the effectiveness, independence, and integrity of the legislatures in the states, territories, and commonwealths of the United States; (2) foster interstate cooperation and facilitate information exchange among state legislatures; (3) represent the states and their legislatures in the American federal system of

government consistent with support of state sovereignty and state flexibility and protection

from unfunded federal mandates and unwarranted federal preemption; (4) improve the operations and management of the state legislatures and the effectiveness of legislators and legislative staff and encourage the practice of high standards of conduct by legislators and legislative staff; and (5) promote cooperation between state legislatures in the U.S. and legislatures in other countries.

NCSL is a nonpartisan organization that represents and supports state legislators from all political parties. The organization does not participate or intervene in any political campaign and is expressly prohibited from doing so by the organizational bylaws.

Governance

The NCSL Executive Committee is the governing body of the organization and is comprised of legislators and legislative staff. The executive committee and conference officers supervise and control the affairs of the conference, direct its committees and publications, implement policies, and supervise the disbursement of funds.

Membership

NCSL's membership consists of the legislatures of each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, each of the territories of the United States, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

Financial Support

NCSL is financed by appropriations from member legislatures, as determined by the 60-member executive committee. Each state is assessed a flat-rate charge, plus an amount prorated based on population. NCSL also receives support from the NCSL Foundation for State Legislatures, a nonprofit tax-exempt 501 (c) (3) corporation.

NCSL offers several publications and research services:

NCSL Today, a daily e-newsletter that covers state-related news stories and research, publications, and multi-media from NCSL.

State Legislatures, a national magazine of state government and politics published 10 times a year featuring articles on significant state and federal public policy issues from all 50 states.

LegisBrief, two-page reports summarizing emerging issues facing state legislatures.

Capitol to Capitol, an information service that provides updates to legislators and staff on federal legislation and events in Washington, D.C.

Bill Information Service (BIS), a 50-state search engine containing the full-text of bills, bill status, and other bill information, as well as featured searches for selected current issues.

Meetings

NCSL hosts an annual legislative summit in July or August, as well as a Fall Forum.

NCSL also conducts in-depth legislative training programs and seminars for legislators and staff on particular issues of importance to state legislatures.

COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS (CSG)

Purpose

CSG was founded in 1933 and is a nonpartisan interstate organization serving all three branches of state and U.S. territorial governments. The organization is a region-based forum that helps state officials exchange ideas to assist them in shaping public policy. Wisconsin is served by the Midwest forum, which includes 11 states as members and four Canadian provinces as affiliate members. CSG provides policy expertise and resources on best practices, facilitates multistate solutions, fosters leader to leader interactions, and advocates for the states at the federal level.

Governance

The CSG Executive Committee has general authority over the funds, property, and management of CSG. The committee is comprised of a variety of officials, including State Legislators, Governors, Chief Justices, Attorneys General, State Treasurers, and Secretaries of State.

CSG offers the following publications and research tools:

The Book of the States, an annual encyclopedia of information on state governments nationwide.

CSG's Suggested State Legislation, a compilation of noteworthy legislation in the states.

CSG Knowledge Center, an interactive website containing hundreds of policy reports, blogs, and other policy items.

Capitol Ideas, a bi-monthly magazine and e-newsletter featuring articles and reports on key state and national public policy issues.

Stateline Midwest, a monthly newsletter focused on key policies and trends of interest to the Midwest and its elected officials.

Membership

CSG CONTACT INFORMATION:

<http://www.csg.org>

CSG Headquarters
Lexington, KY
(859) 244-8000

Midwest Office
Lombard, IL
(630) 925-1922

STAFF CONTACT FOR WISCONSIN:

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Midwest Office

CSG's membership consists of all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and five U.S. territories.

Financial Support

CSG is supported, in part, through direct contributions by the states and other U.S. jurisdictions. Each state's assessment is calculated from a base fee amount and a population factor for that state. CSG administers federal and private foundation grants that support research and information-gathering projects on topics of interest to state officials. The organization also generates revenue from publication sales and by conducting workshops and conferences.

Meetings

CSG holds an annual National Leadership Conference, as well as annual meetings for the regional conferences.

THE UNIFORM LAW COMMISSION (ULC)

Purpose

The ULC was founded in 1892 and is a nonprofit association that serves the states by drafting state laws on subjects where uniformity is desirable and practicable. The ULC drafts uniform or model acts for individual states to consider and enact.

ULC CONTACT INFORMATION:

<http://www.uniformlaws.org>

Chicago, IL
(312) 450-6600

STAFF CONTACT:

John A. Sebert
Executive Director
john.sebert@uniformlaws.org

Governance

The Executive Committee is responsible for implementing the policies adopted by the ULC at its meetings, as well as the duties and powers prescribed by the organization's constitution and bylaws.

Membership

The ULC is comprised of more than 300 commissioners from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico. A commissioner is typically appointed by the Governor of his or her state or by the state's legislature. ULC commissioners must be attorneys and serve on a volunteer basis.

Wisconsin's ULC representatives are selected as specified in s. 13.55, Stats., which provides for eight commissioners: the Director of the Legislative Council staff or a designee (no specified term); the Chief of the Legislative Reference Bureau or a designee (no specified term); two Senators and two Representatives from the two major political parties (two-year term); and two public members appointed by the Governor (four-year term). If a Senator or Representative is unable to serve, a former Senator or Representative may serve instead as long as the person is from the respective house and political party and served as a commissioner during his or her term of office. Wisconsin's commissioners not only represent Wisconsin at ULC meetings, but also comprise a separate commission, the Wisconsin Commission on Uniform State Laws (WCUSL), authorized under s. 13.55, Stats. WCUSL meets at least once every two years and advises the Wisconsin Legislature on uniform laws and model laws and prepares uniform law legislation to be introduced into the Legislature.

Financial Support

The ULC is primarily supported by state appropriations. Every jurisdiction is also asked to fund its commissioners' participation at the ULC annual meeting. In addition, ULC seeks revenue from publication of uniform laws and grants from private foundations and public agencies.

Meetings

The ULC holds an annual meeting, usually in July or August. Drafting and study committees also meet at various other times throughout the year.

The following publications are produced by ULC:

***Guide to Uniform and Model Acts*, a guide to uniform acts designed to assist legislators, legislative drafting bureaus, commissioners, and others interested in state legislation in understanding acts promulgated by ULC and recommended for enactment.**

***Annual Report*, a year-end publication listing ULC's international efforts, tribal government activities, fiscal report, committee reports, and all uniform acts promulgated by ULC.**

***ULC Quarterly Report*, a report published four times a year highlighting drafting news from ULC's various drafting committees, study committees, and standing and governance committees.**

EDUCATION COMMISSION OF THE STATES (ECS)

Purpose

ECS CONTACT INFORMATION:

<http://www.ecs.org>

Denver, CO
(303) 299-3600

STAFF CONTACT:

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ECS was founded in 1965 and helps states develop effective policy and practice for public education. ECS conducts policy research, tracks state education policy trends, provides advice and policy assistance to states, and fosters nationwide leadership and collaboration in education. ECS is a nonpartisan organization that works on issues at all levels of education from pre-K to postsecondary.

The commission's outreach and collaborative efforts serve two major purposes: (1) bringing information into ECS to better understand the issues and problems facing their constituents; and (2) providing the ECS with opportunities to assist policymakers with complex education decisions.

Governance

The ECS Executive Committee has day-to-day oversight of the organization and a Steering Committee of Commissioners maintains broad oversight of ECS.

Membership

Forty-nine states, three territories, and the District of Columbia have enacted the Interstate Compact on Education and are members of the commission. Each member state or territory has seven commissioners. The seven-member Wisconsin delegation consists of the Governor, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, one member each from the Senate and Assembly, and three members appointed by the Governor.

ECS provides the following publications:

***E-Clips*, published electronically on a daily basis, listing education articles from newspapers around the country.**

***E-Connections*, a weekly newsletter with links to key research and reports.**

***The Progress of Education Reform*, a bimonthly publication addressing timely education issues based on the most recent studies and reports.**

Financial Support

ECS is financed by fees paid by member states and territories, as well as grants and sponsorship funding.

Meetings

ECS holds an annual meeting in mid-summer. The ECS steering committee, which consists of one commissioner from each of the member states, holds two additional meetings and other networks also hold various meetings throughout the year.

MIDWEST HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION (MHEC)

Purpose

MHEC CONTACT INFORMATION:

<http://www.mhec.org>

Minneapolis, MN
(612) 677-2777

MHEC was established in 1991 under the statutorily-created Midwest Higher Education Compact. The purpose of the compact is to provide greater higher education opportunities and services in the Midwestern region, with the aim of furthering regional access to, research in, and choice of, higher education for the citizens residing in the member states.

MHEC is charged with promoting interstate cooperation and resource sharing in higher education. The commission seeks to improve access to a wide-variety of high-quality postsecondary education programs while maintaining affordability and maximizing return on investment for students and taxpayers.

Governance

The Executive Committee, made up of a subset of commissioners, acts for the Commission in the interim between annual meetings and oversees development of the Compact's short and long-range activities.

Membership

The Commission is comprised of five commissioners appointed by each state. The commissioners include: the Governor or the Governor's designee, a member of each chamber of the Legislature, and two at-large members, one of whom must have background in post-secondary education. The member states are: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

The following publications are available through MHEC:

***MHEC Annual Report to the States*, published annually addressing the commission's policy initiatives, research reports, and financial statements.**

***Compact eNews*, monthly electronic publication providing information on MHEC programs and events.**

***Research Briefs*, reports published periodically that provide information on higher education issues and policy research.**

Financial Support

MHEC is financed through member state dues, program fees, and foundation grants.

Meetings

The Commission meets annually in November and the Executive Committee meets during the interim.

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